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## **Agencies Release Environmental Data “Vision Document”**

*Report Outlines Ways to Make Information Relevant and Accessible*

SACRAMENTO – Streamlining the collaboration of huge amounts of environmental data between various State and federal agencies is the goal of [Enhancing the Vision for Managing California’s Environmental Information](#), a white paper synopsis of the lessons learned at the [Environmental Data Summit](#) held in June 2014.

The document outlines how each day monumental amounts of environmental data are collected by various State and federal agencies. The information, however, is often inaccessible to others either because of its sheer size or the incompatibility of competing information systems. This inability to retrieve large amounts of data from so-called “agency silos” creates inefficiencies for decision-makers who require more timely facts and figures.

“We’re exploring what tools and technologies are available to integrate data from all these different silos of people and organizations,” said Dr. Cliff Dahm, Lead Scientist for the [Delta Stewardship Council’s Delta Science Program](#). “We want to break down the silos, make it easier for people to exchange the data, and ultimately create a federation of distributed data bases that will communicate with each other.”

Dahm says the white paper has been endorsed by scientists across the U.S. and is being championed by scientists and engineers working at other California State agencies including the [Strategic Growth Council](#), the [Energy Commission](#), the [Office of Technological Services](#), the [State Water Resources Control Board](#), the [Department of Fish and Wildlife](#), and the [Department of Water Resources](#) as well as the [San Diego Supercomputer Center](#).

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*“Coequal goals” means the two goals of providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. The coequal goals shall be achieved in a manner that protects and enhances the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place.”*

– CA Water Code §85054

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The white paper concludes in part that the California's policies on data collection lack definition and require a new governance network; that new clear standards will promote compatibility among various database systems; that implementing business models will improve data management; and that a new system be developed allowing all environmental data to be accessed from a single source point.

There are four distinct "next steps" the white paper proposes are necessary actions to achieve the goal of streamlining the collaboration of huge amounts of environmental data between various State and federal agencies. They are:

- California should establish new policies for managing large amounts of data that will help simplify and expedite public decisions. These new policies should also align with other national and global movements toward streamlining data management
- Develop a system where all environmental data can be accessed from a centralized source point
- Implement new methods for the clear documentation of existing collected data
- Develop business models that will better facilitate the management of data – and adopt funding strategies to sustain those models

Dahm admits these goals do have monetary challenges. "These systems are expensive to build, and everybody thinks it happens automatically without any resources."

The alternative, he says, is already proving to be more expensive because researchers studying areas like California's Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta often do not have access to the previous work of others. They end up, he says, "reinventing the wheel" when trying to reach conclusions in part because data management and exchange mechanisms within the local science community remain in an infancy stage.

"We need to make the data management infrastructure sustainable so that we don't continue to experience peaks and valleys of information where we stand still for a long time because we don't have the money or the people for the project while we wait for the technology to evolve."

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With the white paper's suggestions in place, the authors believe a vast reservoir of data can be tapped and subsequently synthesized into manageable components allowing decision-makers seeking easily digestible material to reach conclusions more quickly and efficiently. In turn, the public will learn more quickly if investments in projects like ecosystem restoration, water supply reliability enhancements, and protecting and enhancing the unique values of the Delta as an evolving place are in fact paying off.

During a press conference held on Friday, October 2, 2015 Dr. Dahm was joined by three other experts on the collection and dissemination of data. They were:

- Dr. Peter Goodwin, former Lead Scientist, [Delta Science Program](#)
- Dr. Michael Norman, Director of the [San Diego Supercomputer Center](#)
- Mr. Scott Gregory, Dep. Director for [Geospatial Info. Systems at the CA Dept. of Technology](#)

"You can't manage what you can't measure, and measurement involves the collection of data," said Dahm. "Ultimately the taxpayer wants to know if we achieved at least some of the desired outcomes we promised. To do that requires collecting data so the data can tell the story."

The white paper and the Environmental Data Summit were a collaborative effort of the [Delta Stewardship Council](#), its [Delta Science Program](#), the [California Department of Water Resources](#), the [Delta Conservancy](#), the [State Water Resources Control Board](#), the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife](#), the [San Francisco Estuary Institute](#), the [State and Federal Contractors Water Agency](#), and [34 North](#).

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### ***About the Council***

Created by the legislature in 2009, the Delta Stewardship Council is composed of members who represent different parts of the state and offer diverse expertise in fields such as agriculture, science, the environment, and public service. Of the seven, four are appointed by the Governor, one each by the Senate and Assembly, and the seventh is the Chair of the Delta Protection Commission. For more information visit <http://deltacouncil.ca.gov/>

For more than three years, California has been dealing with the effects of drought. To learn about all the actions the state has taken to manage our water system and cope with the impacts of the drought, visit [Drought.CA.Gov](#). Every Californian should take steps to conserve water. Find out how at [SaveOurWater.com](#).